

## HINGHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION'S (HHC) RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE QUESTIONNAIRE

### 1. HHC Mission

The Hingham Historical Commission is the Town's agency responsible for advocating for historic preservation and identifying, evaluating and protecting the historic, architectural and archeological assets within the Town. The Historical Commission maintains a "certified" status with the Department of Interior and the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

#### **The Hingham Historical Commission:**

- Advocates for the protection and preservation of historic, architectural and archeological assets in the town
- Administers the demolition delay by-law and provides consultation through a variety of structural and environmental review processes, particularly the federal Section 106 historic review process and the Massachusetts State Register Program
- Sponsors creation of new historic districts and enlargement of or modifications to existing districts
- Maintains the inventory of the town's historic assets, which currently includes information on over 1,500 properties. Updates are made to the inventory throughout the year as more historical properties are researched and additional information is added to properties currently listed
- Administers the Preservation Projects Fund, a fund established to assist carrying out projects and programs important for preserving the historic character of the town
- Educates about historical, design and technical issues related to preservation through programs, publications and individual consultation

### 2. Accountability

The HHC is accountable to the citizens of the Town of Hingham, to the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Massachusetts Historical Commission to the extent provided in Mass. G.L. c. 40 §8D.

3. Factors Contributing to the Successful Function of the HHC

- a) Diverse areas of expertise of HHC members, e.g. preservation, knowledge of the Town's history, architecture, construction, administrative and business experience, law and overall interest by HHC members in town history and historic preservation.
- b) Dedicated Policy and Administrative Support from the Town.
- c) Community Preservation Committee Funding for historic preservation projects and the Demolition Delay By-Law.
- d) Cooperation and communication among Town departments, particularly the Building Department, and support from the Selectmen.

4. Factors to Promote More Effective Functioning

- a) Consideration should be given to an extension of the Demolition Delay By Law to provide for a delay of 12 or possibly 18 months.
- b) The creation of an Executive Director position and increased administrative support. This would enable the development of more preservation initiatives on the part of the Commission members.

5. Addressing Future Challenges

- a. Funding historic preservation will remain a challenge. At the State level, passage of SB90 would guarantee that Hingham would receive an annual 75% match of funds collected via Hingham's CPA surtax. The Town may also wish to consider increasing the CPA surtax.
- b. Updating the Town's Master Plan, including the long-term vision for "Historical and Cultural Resources" and specific recommendations for preserving the history, architecture, and character of our Town.
- c. Involvement of the HHC in the initial planning, development or building activities which may have an impact on historic properties, districts, structures and streetscapes to preserve, protect and promote historic preservation, which is in the communal, cultural and financial interest of all.

6. Additional Matters

A process must be developed for identifying ongoing maintenance and repair, preservation issues and improvement needs for Town owned historic properties, i.e. Hersey House, Memorial Bell Tower, Litchfield House, the former Tree and Park barn, the Head House for the Rope Walk, etc. A regular maintenance schedule and the funding necessary to, at minimum, prevent deterioration of these properties is essential.